

STAFFORD COUNTY
AGRICULTURAL AND PURCHASE OF DEVELOPMENT
RIGHTS COMMITTEE SUMMARY MINUTES
March 22, 2010

The meeting of the Stafford County Agricultural and Purchase of Development Rights Committee for Monday, March 22, 2010, was called to order at 7:05 p.m. by Chairman Tom Coen in the County Administration Conference Room of the County Administration Building.

Members Present: Coen, Clark, McClevey, Hunt, O'Hara and Adams

Members Absent:

Staff Present: Neuhard, Baker, Smith, Lott and Hamock

1. Call to Order

2. Approval of Minutes – February 22, 2010

Mr. Coen asked where we are with the minutes.

Ms. Baker stated they are still not done.

Mr. Coen said we will move them to next month's agenda, and move on to staff update.

3. Staff Update

- **PDR Managers Meeting**

Kathy Baker gave an overview of the PDR Managers meeting that was held in Richmond. They discussed three current easements through NRCS. There is still money available for use and can be applied for anytime. Also, there was a cut of \$300,000 of the \$400,000 originally slated for the state matching funds program. There is still money in the Virginia Land Conservation Program. There are other programs but only three were discussed. The Virginia Land Conservation Conference will be held in Williamsburg this year, and additional information will be provided.

Mr. Hunt asked if we are invited to go at our own expense.

Ms. Baker stated yes. Everyone is welcome to attend the conference, as well as the PDR Managers Meetings in Richmond.

- **PDR Celebration Event**

Ms. Baker said the PDR Celebration Event will likely be held at the end of May or early June. The priority for the Board of Supervisors right now is the budget and we need to work around their schedule.

Mr. Adams asked when the budget will be completed.

Mr. Neuhard stated by the end of April.

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Mr. McClevey said he was working on the program for the event. He indicated he drove out to the site. He thought that there should be a dedication sign and wanted to know the thoughts of the Committee. We can purchase a sign through Federal Prison Industry, Unicor, and a mock up could possibly be made by the next meeting. The Committee agreed.

4. Unfinished Business

- **PDR Ranking Criteria**

Mr. Coen asked for discussion on the rankings.

Ms. Baker stated that maps have been printed maps for everyone to look at. There were questions as to where the farms are in the County. The dark green area on the map indicates agricultural and forested land. The concentration of farms is shown, and many are surrounded by neighborhoods. The Urban Service Area (USA) boundary is on this map. The ordinance focuses on land that is outside of the USA.

Ms. Clark asked what the light green area is.

Ms. Baker said that is vacant land.

Mr. Adams questioned whether the dark green area is land use and not actually farm land.

Ms. Baker stated that she can cross check but it may not be actual farmed land.

Mr. Adams asked if you would get more points for the area with dots on 610 or less points. He noted that a piece of the property that is undeveloped could be saved and could be worth more.

Ms. Baker said that the ordinance focuses on land outside the USA, but still allows for land within the USA to be purchased.

Ms. Clark said she thought Widewater had more open area.

Ms. Baker said that there is still quiet a bit of undeveloped property in the Widewater area, and it can be developed based on the current zoning. Widewater was taken out of the revised USA area and there were some minor adjustments to the land use map. The USA refers to the growth area. She said she can provide copies of the USA maps for all the members.

Ms. Baker began discussion on the ranking criteria, and said that there may be further changes needed where there was no consensus. She started at number 2C which dealt with the proximity of parcel to other parcels with easements. The reason for this originally looked at having farms near open space instead of next to neighborhoods, which would create fewer complaints from adjacent residences.

Ms. Clark stated that just because there is an easement, that does not make it a farm. It appears that with most of these, environmental quality is the main focus.

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Ms. Baker said that this is under the agricultural category, and we would look at the proximity to other farms so that the farms would not be close to houses. People in single family dwellings would not be next to farms.

Ms. Clark stated that people move to agricultural and if there is a farm next door, oh well.

Mr. Adams said he agreed. He doesn't like the Corps easements, and development and permitting is a problem. He asked if it is possible to lump part of number two with four, if the neighbor is in a conservation easement and not batch.

Ms. Baker said there is a possibility that we can get rid of number four because, with the lack of funding, we would not likely be able to purchase batch applications.

Mr. Hunt said that we want the PDR to secure farms and extend the green space.

Ms. Clark said she is fine with that but it does not belong in Section C.

Mr. Coen stated that we can say the agricultural component is comparable to the environment. He recommended moving on to Section D.

Mr. Lott said the question is whether we should change this section. Should we commit to fifty acres or greater or accept farms smaller than that?

Mr. Adams thought that twenty acres was reasonable.

Mr. Hunt agreed. He asked how big a non-commercial horse farm would be. Approximately twenty acres?

Ms. Baker said that it was discussed previously to add "aesthetic quality" after "environmental" in the section title.

Mr. Lott began going through some suggestions to see if that is something the Committee really wants to do. The legend on the printout from the DCR webpage was incorrect. For the pilot program, points were given for the highest category on the site regardless of geographical extent. For example, if any portion of the site scored C4 it was given 4 points.

Ms. Clark asked if all of Virginia was evaluated using the VCLNA model?

Mr. Lott responded yes.

Mr. O'Hara asked if it made sense to give the highest score if only a small portion of the parcel receives that score.

Mr. Lott said it would not be hard to use an average.

Ms. Clark stated that we could give a score based on a larger area.

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Mr. McClevey said that we talked about giving full credit for a small percentage of land receiving the higher score.

Mr. O'Hara asked if we could use a weighted average.

Mr. Lott said he will explore using a weighted average.

Ms. Baker said that based on the map, it could be figured into the percentage system.

Mr. Lott said that for number two, we can try to change the percentage for the parcel. The forest is protected by Chesapeake Bay Act.

Mr. O'Hara asked if a 404 permit would be needed.

Mr. Lott said you have to go through hoops to get a permit when wetlands are disturbed.

Mr. O'Hara asked about the wetlands area.

Mr. Lott said that drainfields are typically located outside of wetlands.

Mr. O'Hara asked if we can buy development rights on property that cannot be developed.

Ms. Bake said that other localities give points specifically for number of development rights on the parcel and the properties that are more highly developed are able to rank higher.

Mr. Neuhard said PDR pays for land that can be developed. It is valuable that the land is contiguous to other land and can be conserved.

Mr. O'Hara said he would be less likely to buy a house next to swamp. He also said natural features would discourage development.

Ms. Clark asked what the Committee thought about keeping "upland" in the forest question. She asked how hard it would be to differentiate between wetland types.

Mr. Lott said he would have to rely on the National Wetlands Inventory. He asked if the Committee wants to delete the word upland from the question.

Mr. Neuhard asked why it should be deleted.

Mr. Lott said that forested wetlands are environmentally valuable. Mr. Silver's property has forested wetlands. Not including forested wetlands would reduce the number of points and may affect the outcome of the ranking.

Mr. McClevey said that environmentally, an acre of trees is not as good as one square block of trees.

Mr. Coen stated it is environmentally better to leave it.

Ms. Clark said we should go with that.

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Mr. Coen recommended moving on to number three.

Mr. Lott said that number three is the same, but we could delete certain terms. For instance, the wildlife corridor was taken out, and a new section was created for this.

Ms. Clark asked if there are dedicated wildlife corridors.

Ms. Baker said that Crows Nest falls within a wildlife corridor.

Ms. Clark asked if there are any state parks in Stafford.

Ms. Baker responded that Stafford has Widewater state park, and Crows Nest is a state Natural Area Preserve.

Mr. Adams asked about what if there is a farm in the watershed. He indicated there is farming on the edge of Able Lake.

Ms. Clark said you would get points for that.

Mr. Coen stated he likes the way number three is written currently.

Mr. Hunt agreed.

Mr. Coen asked if everyone was alright with number three.

Mr. Lott stated that number four had been previously discussed. He indicated that the percentage of watershed would be 100 acres in size of watershed before it becomes perennial.

Mr. Coen asked if there was anything else for question four. If not, we'll move on to number five.

Ms. Baker said that Marty had given suggestions on the issue and how to identify historical and cultural resources. She indicated there were several ways to look at properties, whether they are on the National Register or in the County's historical database.

Mr. O'Hara asked if a Phase One would be required for properties.

Ms. Baker indicated that there is no current requirement for Phase One surveys on properties, but staff will typically request property owners to consider conducting one during the development process.

Mr. Lott stated that with regard to historic viewsheds, it would be difficult to interpret what an important viewshed is. We may need to determine where these are.

Mr. McClevey said that specific historic sites would be protected with a buffer.

Mr. Adams stated that he has been to Saratoga and Mt. Vernon and both sites are protected. He also indicated that he has documented his property, but did not hire someone else to do it.

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Mr. Hunt said that there are sites documented on the property. There is a documented slave cemetery. The plot was surveyed and should receive points for that. There is a lot of history there.

Mr. Lott indicated that it may be eligible for the National Register.

Ms. Baker said that there are not a lot of properties that would have development restricted due to cultural resources. The properties within the County's historic districts would be subject to Architectural Review Board (ARB) approval, but any other preservation of sites is voluntary.

Mr. McClevey said that it could be up to the Historic Commission to say yes to include a buffer to the PDR.

Mr. O'Hara stated that thirteen points may not be enough to protect the site.

Mr. McClevey said that is correct but it could bump the ranking up.

Ms. Clark thought we should add a whole section for preservation of rural character.

Mr. McClevey thought that three subcategories should be added to the question. This includes whether a site is on the National Register, and we also need to look at view sheds.

Mr. Coen said that we can bring this back to the next meeting and discuss it more. It was recommended to look at Marty McClevey's and Patricia Kurpiel's previous comments on aesthetic quality, and also look at Century Farms.

Mr. Neuhard said that we can start the points at the next meeting.

Mr. Coen agreed.

5. Next Meeting – April 26, 2010 Regular Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for April 26.

6. Adjournment

With no further business the meeting was adjourned at 8:57 PM.